

ROAD TEST REPORT

The Mercury "MERCETTE"

ALL mo-peds are different but some are more different than others; one in the latter category is the *Mercury MERCETTE*, a machine which in design, layout, control and performance is in a field all on its own.

In the first place the engine is a 4-stroke, one of the only two on the British 50 c.c. market. It has totally enclosed and automatically lubricated overhead valves, light alloy cylinder with pressed-in liner, ball mains and roller bearing big-end and sump lubrication. The drive is by single plate *Ferodo* lined clutch with built-in rubber cushion shock absorber to a two-speed unit construction gearbox. Ignition is by flywheel magneto with 6-volt lighting coils. The carburettor is an *Amal* and the gear control is by the conventional left hand twist-grip.

Next major item with a difference is the frame which is of tubular construction with duplex tubes running in a straight line from steering head to rear hub. The one gallon tank rests on these tubes immediately behind the steering head. The machine is designed to carry two people if so required and the standard equipment includes a very strong, welded-on tubular carrier, with a sponge rubber pillion seat and footrests well placed immediately below the centre line of the seat as standard extras at 55/- all-in. Front forks are telescopic.

The internal expanding brakes are operated by two handlebar levers and the wheels and tyres also ignore current continental fashion in being 26in. x 2in.

Equipment includes electric horn, dipping headlamp and number plates in the overall price.

Accent on Power

The o.h.v. engine is claimed to

A
different
Mo-ped



give a maximum of 2 b.h.p. at 5,200 r.p.m. which is well above the average for current mo-ped power plants. The novelty of the fourstroke engine has the added interest of a performance on the road that is quite unusual, speed, acceleration and revs all being well over the figures for most similar sized two-strokes. A mean maximum of 36 m.p.h. in top gear was recorded and this speed was reached without any waiting for it, while the low gear getaway was a constant surprise.

Naturally these attributes are not obtained without some sacrifice of other characteristics. Size for size the four-stroke does not pull so well at low revs as its two-stroke rival and the minimum speed in top gear that could be used without discomfort and transmission snatch appeared at best to be around 15 m.p.h. Heavy traffic, therefore, meant low gear all the way but the engine did not seem to mind this and the very positive tickover at traffic stops compensated to some extent for the too lively performance when moving.

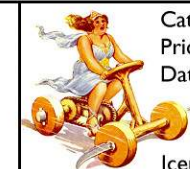
The clutch stood quite a lot of hard work during the central London parts of the test period but behaved perfectly, being smooth in action and requiring no adjustment. The rest of the transmission, however, made itself heard

and felt rather a lot with some whine all the time and quite a howl when the machine was working hard in low gear.

Separate chain drive for the pedal gear is another thing about the *Mercette* that is rarely seen nowadays and we found it advantageous in that it enabled the pedals to be used at any time, with or without the engine, with effective power and in silence. The machine is not intended to be pedalled any real distance and not at all for pleasure, but both for starting and manoeuvring the system worked.

Braking by hand levers alone seemed strange at first because we have become used to back pedal operation for most rear brakes, but once the strangeness wore off the idea had some appeal. Finer control is obtained by hand than by foot and it is certainly a blessing to be able to kick the pedals around to where they are wanted at any time. Again the disadvantage was now felt in traffic, where the use of clutch and brake with one hand and throttle and brake with the other kept the digits pretty busy at times. The four-inch brakes themselves were smooth and very powerful and the telescopic forks with a rather firm setting enabled the front brake to be used to its full capacity to good effect.

Special interest attached to the



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frame design which, although the normal type for high performance *cyclomoteurs* in France is a style unfamiliar here. The duplex tubular frame affords a very high strength/weight ratio and extreme rigidity in all planes. This is essential in a machine built for use as a two-seater and the use of this layout instead of the "bent beam" style now in favour is probably demanded by the requirements of double loading. The appearance, of course, is unconventional and there are no concessions to the modern trends towards enclosure but these points are not likely to weigh heavily against this sporting type machine as they would against more utilitarian designs.

Steering and roadholding were good and the *Wright* saddle afforded a comfortable ride with freedom to pedal if desired. Wide, semi motor cycle type handlebars took some getting used to and demanded a

long reach to the control levers. load but the handling of the machine was naturally heavier at low speeds. The pillion seat is set well below saddle height and the rider's leg reach none too generous. It seems likely that the passengers in actual practice will be mostly youngsters and the arrangement will suit them very well, but full length adults cannot be accommodated comfortably.

Place in the Market

This is not an everyman machine and its main appeal will be based on its high top end performance rather than anything else. The man who wants to travel quickly and economically over fairly open roads and is little worried about low speed docility will be excellently served by it and the

slight accent on the rough, tough and sturdy theme will certainly appeal to the younger sporting riders.

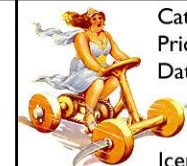
Apart from the well valanced mudguards there is no screening-in and the machine is not so easy to keep outwardly clean as most of its contemporaries. Conversely, the same feature makes for easy accessibility.

Exhaust noise is modest at low speeds and fairly so at high but mechanical noise is a disadvantage. In this respect the *Mercette* is similar to and certainly no worse than the foreign fourstroke which was popular in the 50 c.c. market until recently and should enjoy a similar popularity among the same types of rider.

It may be summed up as a lively machine of mainly sporting appeal at a very reasonable price and one of the cheapest sources of power available in any sphere.

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